

## Figure From The Past by allonsysilvertongue

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**Genre:** F/M, Hopper defending his precious daughter, Hopper vs Brenner confrontation, Joyce is designated baby sitter for El, Other, Papa Hopper, or as Molly Weasley would say "Not my daughter you bitch"

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**Characters:** Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

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**Summary:**

Martin Brenner comes for Eleven. Jim Hopper is having none of that. El is his daughter and he would protect her.

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Post Mind-Flayer, his life was... good. It was not easy, but it was good.

Hawkins Lab had closed down, at least in Indiana, which was one thing off his mind. Although he was sure the Department of Energy have plenty of other labs in other parts of the country but... that was not *his* problem. He tried not to care too much other than what was in front of him.

And that was El.

Hopper had taken time to sit El down just to explain to her of the adoption papers he had signed and what it meant for them. She had repeated the name 'Jane Hopper' almost in reverence and it had stirred something in his heart he thought had died with Sarah.

He could do this. For once, he had hope. El could never replace Sarah but... she was a balm. It wasn't what he thought when he first took her in but she was a soothing balm to his wound, and something for him to focus his energy on.

"You and I.... We're gonna be in this together for the long haul," he patted her hand, smiling at her. "You know what that means? It means forever."

"Forever," El repeated with a nod, letting her finger scratch against his beard with a grin. "This is ... *home*."

Home... The word sounded safe in her mouth and he held on to it. They were not so different after all. None of them had really felt at home anywhere. This was something they could build on now.

As the weeks melted together, and having talked about it with Dr. Owens, they had both agreed to ease El slowly back into society. But instead of enrolling her in a school for the upcoming semester, El was home schooled first. The books came from the boys from their

previous grades as Hopper tried to help her catch up on years of missed academia. The gang visited her after their school to do homework, answer her questions and play board games.

Naturally, his cabin became *the* meeting point. At some point, Karen Wheeler and Joyce Byers had invaded his house. He at least saw it as an invasion, when they took it upon themselves to stock up his kitchen. Joyce had rearranged his beer cans so they were out of sight from the kids and Karen had made sure there were enough snacks to last for two weeks.

He found himself dropping by during his rounds around town to check on the kids, and sometimes wondered how his house became an after school 'day care'.

About four months after the papers were signed, Hopper began taking the kid out in public once or twice a day in the week. Sometimes they would go for breakfast or dinner at the diner or sometimes he would bring her along to the store where Joyce work.

El didn't talk much, only when she was addressed directly and even then, she would sometimes look his way just to make sure it was okay. Whenever he was out with her, he noticed the whispers and smiles he got behind his back. He supposed it must be a sight – him and the kid.

"One of your women you fuck around finally left a kid at your door, huh, Chief?"

"Your math must be really awful," he retorted at the guy. "Kid's much older."

He didn't owe anyone any explanation of who El is and how she came to be. Those who knew, people like Joyce, could be trusted to keep that to themselves.

"So," he started just as they were served pancakes at the diner, "heard you won at dominoes yesterday."

El barely batted an eyelash, as she focused on pouring an unhealthy amount of maple syrup all over her breakfast. "Yes."

"Boys let you win?"

She stopped squeezing the bottle.

"Did not," she sat glaring at him.

The chuckles coming from him made her shake her head but her expression softened considerably.

"Did your English homework?"

"Yes. Don't like homework."

This time, Hopper tried to hide the smirk just so she wouldn't take it to mean that it was okay or encourage her to skip her learning. But he was glad to hear that. She sounded almost like a normal teenager whose biggest problem was homework and not alternate dimensions.

"Presumptuous."

He paused with the fork halfway to his mouth, "What?"

"Dustin said," she lifted her eyes. "New word. What does it mean?"

"It means... When someone's behaving boldly... more confident than they should," he settled for that.

"Oh," she nodded seriously, filing that information for later use. "Can I go to the arcade later?"

May, he corrected silently, but let it slide. Instead of giving an immediate answer, Hopper stuffed a piece of bacon in his mouth and chewed. He knew the boys and Max liked to hit the arcade in the afternoon. He could drop her off before his afternoon shift today and pick her up an hour or so later.

"Sure. Yeah," he shrugged.

She could probably use the fun. It wouldn't do to have her all brooding, gloomy and serious later in life. She was a kid and she needed to be a kid. He wanted that for her, as best as he could provide it, given the situation.

The look on the gang's faces alone was worth the drive to the arcade. They lighted up when they saw his truck coming in. Mike stepped forward, opening El's door with a wide grin.

"Let's see if you can beat my high score," Max smirked.

"Be back in an hour, kid. Wait out here," Hopper shouted through the rolled down window.

Swinging by the Byers' house, he saw Joyce's car was out front. He parked his truck and knocked on her door.

Hopper heard hurried footsteps and a shout of his name before the door was pulled open to reveal a slightly breathless woman.

"What's the matter? Is it Will?"

"Maybe I should come by often so you wouldn't panic each time you see it's me on your door," he joked. "Relax. Last I checked, Will was at the arcade where you dropped him off."

The way the tension in her shoulders visibly eased let him know that as long as Will was out of her sight, she would *always* worry. Alternate dimensions and monsters was not something any parent could bounce from easily.

"Don't mean to be rude, Hop, but why are you here? You here to sample my meatball spaghetti? Jonathan thinks it's the best out there."

"That an invitation to dinner or what?"

She snorted but left the door open as she stepped back so he took his cue and followed. In her kitchen, he leaned against the counter, watching her pour sauce into the pan.

"Flame's too big," he commented.

She shot him an incredulous look but turned it down before the sauce burnt. He tapped the pack in his breast pocket, a silent question to which she shook her head to decline the invitation.

"Where's Jane?"

"At the arcade."

Her brows shot up in surprised.

"You let her?"

He gave a one shoulder shrug, trying hard not to think too much about her being off on her own without him around.

"Baby steps, figured the arcade wouldn't be so bad," he answered.  
"Sure, you don't want a smoke?"

"They will be okay," she smiled at him and he wasn't sure if she was trying to assure him or convince herself. "How is your... daughter? Tell me – I haven't seen her at all this week."

Her eyes twinkled and he was reminded of the Joyce Byers he knew in school, the one who was a tease, a little carefree and one he had got to know better over a few sessions of detention. He never knew that petite girl sitting three seats in front of him in English was a spitfire until he was at the receiving end of it during detention.

"Fine. She's fine. We're good. Turns out she doesn't like homework," he gave a mock gasp.

She laughed, and he really liked the way it seemed to make her look younger, less worried.

"So, uh, I've got to work overnight tonight so, you mind looking after El? You know since you haven't seen her this week, now's your chance."

"Aha," she waved the ladle in his face. "So that is the real reason you're here."

His bark of laughter seemed to delight her the way it did for him. He wondered if this was considered flirting because it was so different than the ones he was used to when he was younger which of course, made him wonder if Joyce flirts. He had been dropping hints but she seemed to brush off his efforts so far. Probably still too soon after

Bob's death. Give it time, he told himself.

She dropped her head, focused on the sauce once more but she was smiling.

"You don't have to try so hard to convince me, Hop. I'll do it," she said. "It'll be good to have some female company here once in a while."

This wasn't the first time she had taken El in when he had to work night. Sure he had left the kid alone numerous times pre - Mind Flayer but he didn't have to keep her hidden and here with the Byers.... She could socialise. The fact that Joyce adored her was a nice bonus.

"Thanks, Joyce. I'll send her over a little before dinner so *she* can sample your meatball spaghetti."

She hummed.

"Tell you what," Hopper flicked off the ashes of his cigarette in the ashtray by the windowsill. "To show you how I very much appreciate you helping me out, I'll pick Will up from the arcade when I get El so you won't have to drive all way out there."

She rolled her eyes. "I'd say you're chivalrous, Jim Hopper, but as it happen, you have to drive to the arcade to get Jane here anyway."

"You got me," he chuckled, leaving her shaking her head as he headed back out to the truck.

The last thing he expected when he arrived at the arcade was to see a teenager with a bad mullet haircut fuming near the entrance. *Max's brother*, he recalled, *the guy who beat up that other kid, Steve*.

Max, Dustin and Lucas were nowhere to be seen and a quick count of the bicycles parked outside confirmed that two was missing. Mike, he noticed, was on the pay phone, clearly frantic and trying to call -

"Chief Hopper!" Mike startled when he saw him, dropping the receiver to hang by its cord. "I called but - He's got her! He got El."

“Who’s got her?”

“The lab guy. The – “

“Dr. Owens?”

He knew deep down that it wasn't him because Mike wouldn't have panicked. But if it was Dr. Owens, Hopper would know where to find him *and* give the doctor a piece of his mind for pulling shit like this. He would know where to find Dr. Owens.

“The guy who ... I – I can’t remember his name. From the lab. El calls him Papa. He – He just came and took her away in his car and El didn't want to go but he pulled her hand, and we couldn’t -”

He felt the icy cold dread, could hear his blood rushing in his vein. It was presumed that Martine Brenner was dead but El had actually told him what came from her little road trip to find her mother – that Brenner might still be alive out there – if the former agent was to be believed.

Brenner was here. He had taken El.

Hopper's fingers curled into a fist, his breathing heavy. He forced himself to remain calm, to *think*.

He couldn't lose her. He couldn't lose another kid, not again. This was his worst nightmare coming to life.

"How long ago was this?" He demanded.

Will burst out the front door and came to a staggering stop when he spotted Hopper. He breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that with the Chief around things would be handled

"Just left," he said, slightly breathless. "I lost sight of them from the window. Max, Dustin and Lucas chased his car on their bikes. I don't know how far they can go on but - "

That was all Hopper needed to know before he took off running to his truck.



"The hell are you doing?" He hollered at the teenager leaning against his car, watching them with open disinterest. "Didn't think to go after your sister?"

"She knows she's walking if she's late," he retorted.

*Menace*, Hopper thought violently.

He would have asked Billy to send Will back to Joyce since he still wasn't allowed to go anywhere on his bike but Hopper wasn't in the trusting mood right now, so he told Mike to get Karen to get them *both* home.

He didn't wait to see if Mike called his mother. Hopper jumped into his truck and gave chase, tyres peeling against the asphalt. Five minutes out, he drove passed the three kids, panting by the road side.

"Get back to home all of you and *stay* home," he shouted out the window. "I got it."

The blue sedan was within sight and he stepped on the gas, muttering under his breath for the truck to go faster. If he could just cut the car off....

It was then that he caught sight of the wobbling tree in front of him and jammed brake. The tree fell in front of the car, crushing its hood and pinning it in place. Eleven must have seen his truck coming for her.

"Good kid," he smacked the dashboard in pride.

Jumping out the truck, he pulled the door of the blue car open, gun pointing in front of him. Inside, El was screaming, tugging hard at something they had only halfway managed to fix on her head. He didn't know what it was but if he was out here trying to kidnap a kid with psychic abilities, he would try to shut that power down temporarily and he supposed that thing around her head was it.

Brenner emerged from the car with blood trickling from a head wound. At the sight of him, Hoppers stomach churned and as the scientist saw Hopper standing there, his lips curled into a malicious smirk.

“We meet again.”

He was dressed as he did before, in pressed suit, matching tie and polished shoes but his face was that of a tired old man, not that Hopper had any sympathies for him in his heart.

“Can’t say I’m pleased.”

“You have my daughter,” Benner stated calmly which only enraged Hopper. “Come here, Eleven.”

It must have been years of having that command ingrained in her because El jerked forward, involuntarily. Instinctively, Hopper put a hand on her shoulder to stay her but she seemed completely unaware of it. Her eyes were fixed on that man.

“You disappointed me, Eleven,” Benner spoke softly, almost soothingly and Hopper didn't trust that sickly silky voice. “You left when we could have done so much more.”

Her lips quivered and Hopper blinked. This was the same girl who had easily killed demadogs and monster without any fear and yet now, she stood rooted to the spot, clearly paralysed by terror.

He wished he could take away the years of trauma. He wished he could fix her, make El whole and unafraid.

"It's okay, darling," Brenner knelt in front of her. The affectionate tone the man was trying so hard to adopt sounded misplaced. "I forgive you. I'm your Papa and I want to tell you now that everything is okay. We'll forget the past and we can work it all out from here. All you need to do is get the tree off the car and come with me."

“Don’t listen to him, kid.” Hopper said, his voice gruff from the fear he was trying to mask. He had faced unspeakable things from another dimension and yet the thought of El being taken away from him was more horrifying than anything. "He wants something from you. He ain't here 'cause he's suddenly had a change of heart and cares about you."

Brenner stood where he was, unwavering. He held his hand out to Eleven.

"Don't you dare. I'll shoot you dead," Hopper warned.

"Really? In front of *her*?" he taunted. "Now, what will she think?"

"Come on, El, let's go," Hopper tugged lightly on her shoulder, hoping that it would snap her back.

He would get Powell or someone in the station to get Brenner but the important thing right now, was to get El away from this toxic junk as quickly as he could.

"Eleven," Benner spoke her name firmly and with authority that he used to control her with. "Your place is with me. Next to me, always. We'll go to your Mama. A ... family," he forced the word out, as if it cost him a lot just to say it. "I know you want that."

A muscle in Hopper's jaw ticked. He feared if El would fall for that, hook line and sinker. Family was him. It was them in his cabin. Family was not with this abusive scientist whose only goal in seeking her out right now when it would jeopardise his freedom was likely driven by desperation to save his skin, to claw at some bullshit scientific breakthrough. It was for selfish reasons and nothing else.

He would not allow El or anyone to go through that.

He gripped the gun tighter in his hand, his index finger ready to squeeze the trigger.

"I know what you want, Eleven. I've always known."

"That's enough," Hopper snapped, and without any warning, landed a solid punch straight for the man's nose.

He heard the sickening crunch. Hopper had never felt so satisfied. Brenner fell backward from the force of it and as if the spell was broken, El blinked.

She looked around. Her gaze caught his and he knelt in front of her so they were eye to eye.

"You okay?"

"Yes. I was..." She touched her chest and Hopper covered her hand with his, feeling the erratic beating of her heart. "... scared."

"It's over. He's down," Hopper said. "I got you, kid. I'm always gonna have your back so you don't have to be scared, yeah?"

Her eyes were bright and the tears were pooling. He sighed. If only he had waited outside the arcade... He could have stopped it. None of this would have happened. El wouldn't have been terrified. The whole thing could have been avoided.

*Brenner would still come for her. If it wasn't today, it'll be tomorrow, a voice whispered.*

When he pulled her close, she melted into him, pressing her face on his shoulder. He held her tighter.

"Listen, kid, I can't change what happened to you in the past but... I'll do my damnest best to make sure nothing bad happens to you now. You know why?"

"Because you're not Papa..."

"Yeah, I'm not him. But that's not it," he said. "Remember what I said when I told you about those papers I signed? I'm not gonna let anything happen to you. You and I, we're in this together."

"Forever," she said, remembering their conversation

"Yeah, so I don't want you scared. You should never be, with me. Sometimes.... Sometimes we're gonna get angry, like we did before, you're gonna shout at me when you're angry and I'm gonna shout right back at you but when it's all done, it's still going to be you and me. I – " he swallowed. He couldn't remember the last time he said those words. To Sarah, maybe. "I love you and when you love someone, you take care of them."

She nodded, stepping back from him a little to look at him. She kissed his stubble cheek.

"Me too," she said and he understood. He ruffled her hair. "We leave him here."

She gestured at Brenner's unconscious body.

"As much as I'd like to let some other truck roll him over, best if we bring him in to the station. Help me out."

She pulled on a leg when she saw Hopper doing the same, and he dumped Benner at the back of his truck, not caring if his head hit anything. He tossed her a smile in the passenger seat. In the middle of the drive back, she reached out for his hand and held it all way to the Byers' house.

"I'll be back soon. Gotta take care of that," he pointed over his shoulder to the truck where Brenner's body was.

El nodded and went in without a word.

Joyce stood staring at him but he shook his head.

"Tell you later," he mouthed, driving away.